

# GLOBAL SCENE ANGELA DANSBY



## PERU: THE MAGIC KINGDOM

With diverse topography ranging from desert, to the Andes Mountains, to the Amazon rainforest, everywhere you go in Peru is its own world. You can experience three major ecosystems in one trip, which accounts for much of each area's uniqueness along with past and present subcultures. Needless to say, Peru is not a place for comfort seeking travelers. It has the call of the wild beckoning adventurers, nature lovers, and history buffs.



Peru is also magical as the “archeological capital of the world.” It is poor economically but rich in spirit and culture. While the northern half of the country has much to offer, first-time visitors should focus on the southern half, excluding the capitol of Lima. With some of the world’s greatest wonders at your fingertips in Peru, don’t waste time in Lima. As far as big cities go, one can do much better elsewhere without the fishy smell and crime. You have to fly into Lima from the U.S., but head directly to Cuzco in the southeast upon arrival. If you have four hours to kill in between flights, catch a cab to Miraflores, Lima’s most affluent neighborhood, where embassies, nice residences, and parks are located. A great suggested 11-day itinerary (13 days with overseas travel time) for southern Peru includes (in the following order) three days in Cuzco with day trips to Machu Picchu, surrounding ruins, and the Sacred Valley; four days in the Amazon at Manu National Park; one day in Puno on Lake Titicaca; one day in Arequipa; and two days in the Cañón del Colca.

### ARCHEOLOGY: CUZCO & THE RUIN CRAWL

Cuzco is the jumping off city for Machu Picchu, the surrounding ruins, and the Sacred Valley. The past and present often blur in Peru, as it is a living museum with artifacts dating back to 3500 BC, and excavations occurring as you read. Last year, new Inca artifacts were excavated at Sacsayhuamán (pronounced “sexy woman”) near Cuzco. Traces of the Inca (royalty of the Quechua people) era are all over the area. For instance, the locals speak Quechua as a first language rather than Spanish. Of course, Machu Picchu (which means “old peak” in Quechua) is the best-known example of Inca architecture and should not be missed. To get to Machu Picchu, you must take one of three trains from Cuzco to Aguas Calientes (Hot Waters), then a bus up curvy roads to the Inca ruins. Take the cheap Orient-Express PeruRail ([www.perurail.com](http://www.perurail.com)) backpacker train on the way up and the more expensive Vistadome train on the way down for more comfort after a day of hiking. The third train option is the luxury Hiram Bingham, which is expensive but includes fine dining. The one hour (each way) trek to Huayna Picchu (“young peak” in Quechua) must be started by 1 pm and concluded by



Machu Picchu



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4 pm due to restricted hiking times. You should arrive at Machu Picchu by 9 am, hike Huayna Picchu first, and then have a private tour guide take you around the ruins. Standard tours don't allow time to hike the young peak, where views of Machu Picchu are second to none. Advanced arrangements for a private guide should be made through an agency like Peruvian Travel y Turismo. Back in Cuzco, The Plaza de Armas (main city square) is spectacular. There, La Catedral has one of the city's greatest collections of colonial art. Exquisite, expensive clothing and jewelry can be purchased in nearby boutiques. The artsy neighborhood of San Blas has wonderful paintings, woven baskets, pottery, and other art. The Centro Artesenal Cuzco south of town is also a great place to shop.

### THE AMAZON: MANU NATIONAL PARK

Wildlife is abundant and diverse in Peru. Parque Nacional Manu, north of Machu Picchu, is one of the best areas of protected rainforest in the Amazon. It has more than 1,700 bird species, 20 types of monkeys, jaguars, pumas, and piranhas (two of the four species are vegetarian). The cure for cancer, some theorize, must be in the Amazon somewhere. Ultimately, the jungle greens are a giant salad bowl for a multitude of insects and animals. A tribe of naked people even munches out of this bowl in a secluded part of Manu. Manu Expeditions ([www.manuexpeditions.com](http://www.manuexpeditions.com)) offers top-shelf packages with a roundtrip charter flight by the Peruvian Air Force from Cuzco to Boca Manu (an airstrip cut into the rainforest), lodging and four-star meals at the reputable Manu Wildlife Center, and an English-



Chappuchin Monkey in Manu National Park

speaking guide. The four-day "Manu Macaw Lick" package includes day and night hikes through the Amazon, excursions to a macaw clay lick (where dozens of gorgeous birds congregate), a tapir (the largest land mammal in South America) lick, and an oxbow lake, where giant river otters play. This all-inclusive package (\$980/person minus tips to guides and boat drivers) begins every Friday, every month of the year, and is well worth the time and expense.



## HIGH WATER:

### PUNO AND LAKE TITICACA

Lake Titicaca, a massive, gorgeous lake nearly 4,000 meters above sea level flanked by the Andes, is worth the trek to Puno. Given the altitude, the air is unusually crisp and clear in Puno and the sunlight dances on the surface of the lake's deep water. Walking on the squishy Islas Flotantes (Floating Islands) of the Uros people, which are made of totora reeds, is a must-do. The Uros make their homes, boats, and crafts out of the reeds. Several tour companies go to the islands, and you can take a reed boat ride with a local. Having a guide is key because the people of Lake Titicaca speak Aymara as their first language rather than Spanish.



Reedgrass Boats on Lake Titicaca

## SPANISH COLONIALISM:

### AREQUIPA

Arequipa is a Spanish colonial city, the second largest in Peru, but perhaps it's most interesting as the national hub for intellectuals and artists. Given this fact, it is no surprise that Lima and Arequipa are rival cities. The smoking volcano El Misti looms above Arequipa along with active Sabancaya and inactive Ampato, where Juanita, the 500-year old Ice Maiden, was found in 1995. Seeing the ice mummies at the Museo Santuarios Andinos is a must. Arequipa offers modern, upscale restaurants like Zig Zag ([www.zigzagrestaurant.com](http://www.zigzagrestaurant.com)) in addition to traditional Peruvian fare.



Children Blowing Bubbles on Islas Flotantes





Women in Bolero Hats



Cañón del Colca

## VOLCANOES, VALLEYS & STARS: CAÑÓN DEL COLCA

The Cañón del Colca, one of the world's deepest canyons surrounded by snow-covered volcanoes, is well worth a two-day excursion on rocky, dusty roads to see the stars under perfect conditions. Cañón del Colca has one of the highest altitudes in Peru (3700 m), higher than Cuzco (3326 m), so take a prescription of Diamox (acetazolamide) and drink coca

tea to prevent altitude sickness. The area is known for women wearing special bolero hats (a Spanish custom), wild vicunas (South American deer), and Cruz del Cóndor (the best spot to observe condors in the wild). The city of Chivay in the canyon has hot springs with "healing properties." Be sure not to get burned stepping into the unlabeled part of the pool where the scalding water pours in. Giardino Tours ([www.giardinotours.com](http://www.giardinotours.com)) has an excellent overnight tour that includes all of these sights, lodging in Chivay, an English-speaking guide, meals, and other entertainment. The English planetarium show at the Casa Andina Colca Canyon is a must-see. The Southern Hemisphere can be observed in the planetarium, then outdoors with almost the same amount

of clarity. The Southern Cross is like a beacon in the sky from which you can see other constellations like Scorpio and the Big Dipper (inverse from Chicago's sky). Peru's location close to the equator, combined with low lights and pollution in the canyon, results in starry, starry nights. A state-of-the-art telescope is next to the planetarium and you can view star clusters and galaxies usually only seen in an astronomy book.



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### MORE TIME? MORE OPTIONS

With more time in Peru, you can hike the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu (four days); whitewater raft on the Río Urubamba; sand-board down dunes at Huacachina; fly over the mys-

terious Nazca Lines (giant etchings in the desert floor); overnight with islanders on Amantaní or Taquile on Lake Titicaca; or photograph penguins, sea lions, and flamingos at the Reserva Nacional de Paracas and Islas Ballestas ("the poor man's Galapagos") in southern Peru. For archeology beyond Machu Picchu, head north by air to Trujillo to see remnants of pre-Inca civilizations; serious hikers can take an eight-hour bus ride from Lima to Huaraz (no flights are available) to trek the spectacular snow-covered peaks of the Cordillera Blanca. This mountain range has 50 glaciated peaks. Nature lovers may opt for a two-day excursion to Pucallpa (roundtrip flight from Lima required) to see freshwater pink dolphins. Of course, natural beauty is everywhere in Peru.



Dragon Boat on Lake Titicaca



Weaver in Cañón del Colca

### TIPS

The best time of year to go to Peru is during its winter and dry season, which is Chicago's summer. While day temperatures are mild, nights on Lake Titicaca and in the Andes are cold, and temper-



atures can drop below freezing. The Amazon, by contrast, is very hot (85°F+) and humid, like a steam bath. Be sure to pack for all environments. American, Continental, and Delta Airlines fly to Lima with one domestic stop, such as Miami. Airfare is \$700 to \$900 in late May to early September. LanPeru ([www.lan.com](http://www.lan.com)) is the major domestic airline that connects most tourist cities. Flights are cheaper if purchased on Trafico Peru ([www.traficoperu.com](http://www.traficoperu.com)), the South American equivalent of Expedia.

Thievery is common in Peru. Carry your passport and sols (Peruvian currency) with you at all times in a pouch underneath your clothing. Never let any valuables on your body show, and keep your camera(s) covered when not in use. Leave any unnecessary valuables like jewelry at home. Also, beware of bogus cab drivers. Only get into officially marked taxis that have a lit company number on top. Lock your doors from the inside, and never allow a driver to pick up a second passenger. Leave home without your American Express, as it is less widely accepted abroad than Visa and MasterCard, but do not leave home without vaccinations (yellow fever, tetanus, and typhoid), earplugs for airplane travel and sleeping in hotels (late-night noise is common in populated areas), travel insurance (can be purchased for a reasonable fee online via [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)), a roll of toilet paper (public toilets do not supply it without a fee), and an empty duffle bag to fill with gifts. Amazon necessities are anti-malaria pills (Malarone, not Larium), deep-woods mosquito repellent, a flashlight, Swiss Army knife, gum boots (can be purchased in Cuzco), lightweight hiking pants and long-sleeved shirts, bandanas, binoculars, and citronella oil as a mosquito-repelling air freshener on your pillow at night (sheets often smell like mildew in jungle lodges). Do not take risks with tap water and ice in Peru; you will be sorry. Only drink bottled water and drinks without ice unless you are certain the ice comes from a purified source.



Feeding Alpacas in Sacred Valley





Little Girl in Sacred Valley Market

### SHOPPING

Haggling for a good price is the name of the game in all outdoor marketplaces. The three sacred symbols of the Inca period – the serpent, puma, and condor – representing the underworld, earth, and heaven – are all over Peru in the forms of jewelry, sculptures, and paintings. Suggested gifts include gold and silver jewelry, paintings and other art with symbolic designs, woven baskets, pottery, alpaca wool clothing, gloves, scarves, blankets, and CD recordings of pan pipe/Andean music. Ilaria is a fine jewelry and silverware shop in Cuzco and Arequipa. Warning: do not bring coca leaves or tea back with you to the U.S., as it is illegal to do so. **scene**

### HOTELS

**Casa Andina** ([www.casa-andina.com](http://www.casa-andina.com))  
Hotels in all of the following cities are excellent for the price (\$60-\$80/night for a double). In addition, the following less expensive hotels are recommended in major tourist areas in southern Peru.

#### CUZCO

**Torre Dorada**, [www.torredorada.com.pe](http://www.torredorada.com.pe)  
**Los Apus**, [www.losapushotel.com](http://www.losapushotel.com)  
**Tupac Yupanqui Palace**,  
[www.hoteltupacyupanqui.com](http://www.hoteltupacyupanqui.com)

#### PUNO-LAKE TITICACA

**PlazaMayor**,  
[www.plazamayorhostal.com](http://www.plazamayorhostal.com)

#### AREQUIPA

**La Casa de Mi Abuela**,  
[www.lacasademiabuela.com](http://www.lacasademiabuela.com)

#### CHIVAY-Cañón del Colca

**La Casa di Mama Yacchi**,  
[www.lacasademamayacchi.com](http://www.lacasademamayacchi.com)